

Green Country Veteran

A JACK C. MONTGOMERY VA MEDICAL CENTER MAGAZINE

ISSUE 04 | FALL 2013

**WWII Veteran Recalls
Battle of Jima, Mt.
Suribachi Flag Raising
Story on Page 9**

And Much More!

Green Country
Veteran is the official
magazine for
Veterans who receive
their care through the
Jack C. Montgomery
VA Medical Center.



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On the cover: World War II Veteran Lloyd Dinsmore was the guest speaker for the hospital's POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony on Sept. 10. Dinsmore fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima and witnessed his fellow troops raise an American flag on Mount Suribachi on Feb. 23, 1945. Read his story on pg. 9.

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Green Country Veteran

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One of Those Things You Gotta Do — The Flu Shot



Tens of thousands die each year of flu and pneumonia.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine is designed to protect against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season.

Getting the flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available each year is always a good idea, and the protection you get from the vaccination will last throughout the flu season.

It's time. Get your flu shot. Flu shots are available for Veterans enrolled in VA health care.

Veterans can receive a free flu shot by scheduling an appointment with their primary care provider.

So how do the shots protect you? They make your immune system stronger and get it ready to fight off the viruses. After the shots, you may have some slight aches and pains for a day or two. Some, but not all, people get a slight fever and feel a bit weak.

It is a whole lot easier to get the flu than you may think. The flu is an airborne virus. It's usually transmitted when someone coughs or sneezes.

These symptoms show that the shots are working and are very mild compared to how bad you would feel if you get the flu or pneumonia. Flu season starts in December every year.

There's no need for people to die from the flu or pneumonia. These illnesses are preventable and prevention is easy.

Do your part. Protect yourself, protect your loved ones and get vaccinated.

Getting the flu is easy. It's even easier to get the flu shot.

You just might be saving your life.

You can take everyday preventive steps like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs. If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading influenza to others.

Want more information about the flu? Visit the Veterans Health Library, www.veteranshealthlibrary.org, for answers to probably every question

Many people around you carry the flu virus and could give it to you. And if you get the flu, you could give it to your caregiver, your family, your friends or anybody you come into contact with.



VA Reaches Out to Veterans about the Health Care Law

The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched an awareness campaign and a new website, www.va.gov/aca, to let Veterans know what the Affordable Care Act means for them and their families. Veterans receiving health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs will see no change in their benefits or out-of-pocket costs when portions of the Affordable Care Act take effect on January 1, 2014.

“VA wants all Veterans to receive health care that improves their health and well-being,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “If you are enrolled in VA

health care, you do not need to take any additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards. If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can apply at any time.”

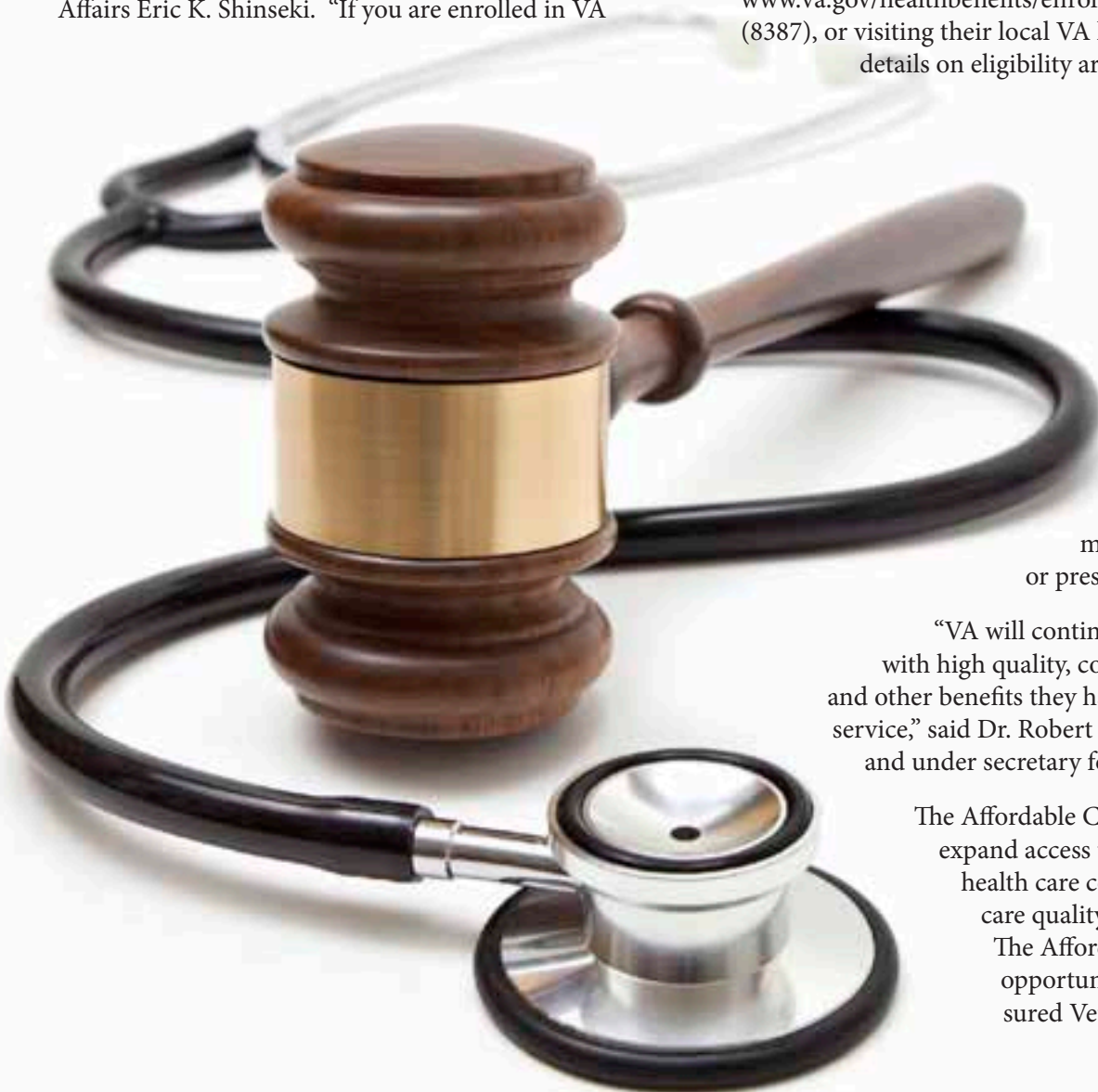
“VA encourages eligible Veterans who are not enrolled in VA’s health care system to take advantage of the world-class care we provide to the men and women who have served this Nation in uniform,” Shinseki added.

Veterans can apply for VA health care at any time by visiting www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387), or visiting their local VA health care facility. Full details on eligibility are available at www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.

VA’s health care system for Veterans has no enrollment fee, no monthly premiums and no deductibles. Most Veterans also have no out-of-pocket costs, though some may have small copayments for some health care or prescription drugs.

“VA will continue to provide Veterans with high quality, comprehensive health care and other benefits they have earned through their service,” said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA’s chief physician and under secretary for health.

The Affordable Care Act was created to expand access to coverage, reduce rising health care costs, and improve health care quality and care coordination. The Affordable Care Act creates new opportunities for coverage for uninsured Veterans and their families.



There are more than 1.3 million Veterans and more than 950,000 spouses and children of Veterans without health insurance. Most uninsured Veterans are eligible for VA health care. For those who are not eligible for VA care – such as Veterans’ family members – the law created a new Health Insurance Marketplace.

In 2014, the Marketplace will be a new way to shop for and purchase private health insurance. People who purchase insurance through the Marketplace may be able to lower the costs of health insurance coverage by paying lower monthly premiums. For more information, visit www.healthcare.gov.

For information about VA health care and the Affordable Care Act, VA encourages Veterans and family members to visit the new website at www.va.gov/aca, or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. or Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Eastern time. The new website includes a Health Benefits Explorer, where Veterans can learn about the benefits they can receive if they enroll in VA care. ★

Three things Veterans should know about the new health care

- 1** VA wants all Veterans to receive health care that improves their health and well-being.
- 2** If you are enrolled in VA health care, you don’t need to take additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards. The health care law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans’ out-of-pocket costs.
- 3** If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can apply at any time.



Smile!

**VA has you covered with the new
VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP)**

The VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP) offers dental insurance at a special low rate for Veterans. Choose from plans offered by Delta Dental and MetLife.

Enroll now. Coverage begins January 1, 2014.
To learn more and sign up, contact the dental plans directly:

Delta Dental: www.deltadentalvadip.org or
(855) 370-3303

MetLife: www.metlife.com/VADIP or (888) 310-1681



Participants in VADIP pay a fixed monthly premium in addition to any copayments required by the plan. Eligibility for VADIP is limited to Veterans enrolled in VA health care and beneficiaries of VA's Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA). To learn more about eligibility, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration

Home Away From Home

Vietnam Veteran Thrives at Adult Day Care, Discovers Love for Art

Story and photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

In 1968, Oklahoma native Melvin Barnes was 19 years old when he was drafted into the U.S. Army for a period of two years.

After completing basic training, the Army sent Barnes to Virginia to learn how to perform maintenance on Army helicopters. Then Barnes deployed to Vietnam with the 180th Assault Support Helicopter Company where he served for more than a year during 1969 to 1970.

Along with repairing helicopters and pulling guard duty at his base, Barnes went on combat missions to retrieve helicopters that crashed or were shot down by enemy fire.

“One time, we had to go up to Hamburger Hill and that wasn’t a good sight there,” he said. “We had bad days of course and we got hit a couple times.”

Even though he didn’t join the Army voluntarily, he is proud of his service in Vietnam.

“I’m proud to serve my country,” said Barnes, who is now 65 years old. “I would have re-enlisted but I knew what would happen. They probably would have kept me there another year in Vietnam. Then I came back to the states.”

For years, the war didn’t affect Barnes. He made Bartlesville his home and worked at REDA Pump for 35 years in a



A photo of a miniature town Vietnam Veteran Melvin Barnes built out of wood.

foundry and eventually retired at the age of 55.

But memories of the war resurfaced. In Vietnam, Barnes experienced the deaths of fellow soldiers, including a friend who took his own life 15 days before he was set to return to the states.

"He couldn't take it and went and shot himself," he said.

More than eight years ago, he began attending appointments and group sessions at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center's Behavioral Medicine Clinic in Tulsa and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

During his treatment, Barnes also learned about VA's Adult Day Health Care Program, which provides funding for eligible Veterans to attend a private facility in the local community where they can participate in social activities and receive peer support and companionship.

With the help of VA, Barnes enrolled at Day Break eight years ago, an Adult Day Health Center in Bartlesville, and attends Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

At the health center, he participates in group activities, fitness and art classes, and has nutritional meals.

When he began attending the art classes, he quickly discovered a passion for art.

"When I got here about eight years ago, I didn't know how to paint, nothing," said Barnes. "I knew how to draw a little bit. But I didn't know how to paint and the art teachers here helped me."

He immersed himself into art projects such as woodworking, ceramics and paintings.

"Mostly, I paint ceramics," he said. "I love to paint ceramics. I like to draw horses and cows, stuff like that. Sometimes I might draw a scene."

He has won several awards for his work including first place multiple times at the Washington County Fair. His journey from new artist to award winning artist has impressed the Day Break staff.

"When he came in here, he was like 'I don't think I can do art at all,'" said Leah Alexander, Day Break Social Activities Coordinator. "His woodworking is just amazing. His eye for detail and color and how to blend things is just amazing."

In February 2013, Barnes was ready for a new challenge and decided to build a miniature town out of wood. It took

"It just came to my mind, 'hey I'm going to build a town,'" he said. "It took me a long time, but I enjoyed it."

While the time he spends creating artwork at Day Break is an enjoyable experience, it also helps him cope with the memories of war and his PTSD symptoms.

"It helps a lot," he said. "Here, you don't think hardly about anything. You're kind of in a different world. There's no pressure. There are a lot of other Veterans here and it's helped them too."

Alexander said she has seen a remarkable transformation for Barnes since he began attending the health center.

"Melvin has actually come a long way," she said. "He's come out of his shell."



Vietnam Veteran Melvin Barnes poses for a photo with a miniature town he built out of wood.

him five months to complete the four foot by eight foot town, which includes houses, a school, church, jail house, gas station and city park.

He's more willing and open to talk. He shares a lot more and he seems happier. I've seen a huge improvement from someone who would just sit there quietly to someone who will get up

and dance in front of the group now and sing. It's really been a blessing to him."

When Barnes is feeling down, he often speaks with Alexander.

"I love listening to his stories," said Alexander. "He's the kind of person

you just want to be around. He makes you feel good. Even though he may be having a bad day, he always tries to lift other people up. He's very caring." ★

Vietnam Veteran Melvin Barnes paints ceramic artwork at Day Break, an Adult Day Health Center in Bartlesville.



Home and Community VA Based Services

The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center provides contract services for eligible Veterans at four Adult day Health Care facilities and 15 nursing homes in Eastern Oklahoma.

Adult Day Health Care is a program Veterans can go to during the day for social activities, peer support, companionship and recreation.

The program is for Veterans who need skilled services, case management and assistance with activities of daily living (e.g., bathing and getting dressed) or instrumental activities of daily living (e.g., fixing meals and taking medicines); are isolated or their caregiver is experiencing burden. Adult Day Health Care can be used in combination with other Home and Community Based Services.

Services such as nursing care, therapists, social workers and others may also be available.

Adult Day Health Care can provide respite care for a family caregiver and can also help Veterans and their caregiver gain skills to manage the Veteran's care at home.

To learn more about VA Home and Community Based Services, Veterans and their family members can speak to a VA social worker or call Jan Gentry, JCMVAMC Community Care Coordinator, at 918-441-0983. ★

Veteran Recalls Battle of Iwo Jima, Flag Raising

Story by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist
Photos by Christopher Beshears, Visual Information Specialist

On Sept. 10, the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center honored Prisoners of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) during a POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony at the hospital.

Guest speaker for the ceremony was World War II Veteran Lloyd Dinsmore, who fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima and witnessed his fellow troops raise an American flag on Mount Suribachi on Feb. 23, 1945. Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal took the image of the second flag-raising, which is one of the most iconic photos from World War II.

When Missouri native Lloyd Dinsmore approached San Diego via train on January 1, 1944 for Marine Corps Boot Camp, he and the other Marine recruits heard chanting in the distance. But they couldn't quite make out what was being said until they reached the train platform.



World War II Veteran Lloyd Dinsmore

"It wasn't long before we understood what they were saying and that was, 'you ain't gonna like it here,'" he said with a laugh. "Well, for the first two days of boot camp, they were dead right. I didn't like it. But after the second day, the esprit de corps of the world famous U.S. Marines began to settle in and from then on I enjoyed all of boot camp training."

After completing boot camp and seven weeks of tank training where he learned how to do

Iwo Jima Flag Raising



every job on a tank and handle ammunition, he was assigned to the 2nd Armored Amphibious Tank Battalion in Oceanside, Calif.

In April 1944, Dinsmore and his unit shipped off to Maui, which would only serve as a brief staging ground.

“We enjoyed seeing the beautiful Hawaiian Islands and the waving palm trees, pineapple fields and coconut trees,” recalled Dinsmore.

But his time in paradise didn’t last long. In June 1944, Dinsmore took part in the invasion of the island of Saipan.

After the combat ended, the Marines established a base and the U.S. Navy Seabees built an airfield for the new B-29 bomber, which was used to bomb the Japanese mainland.

“Our camp on Saipan was about three miles from the runway from the B-29s,” he said. “This B-29 was an awesome machine. We had never seen an airplane so big. They began a 24/7 bombing barrage from Saipan and Tinian and Guam to the Japanese homeland.”

Dinsmore said the B-29’s had to fly more than 1,500 miles to hit Japan and had no place to land if they were hit by anti-aircraft fire or if they had mechanical problems.

“They lost a lot of men because of that,” he said.

To give the U.S. military a staging ground for future combat operations and a place for the B-29’s to land, the U.S. military began preparations to take the island of Iwo Jima.

Dinsmore and his battalion were given the mission of landing on the beach first with their tanks and providing supporting fire for the Marine infantry that would follow.

“A mock-up of the island had been



U.S. Marines travel aboard U.S. Navy Landing Ship, Tanks (LST) en route to the island of Iwo Jima.

made for us to see, basically what the terrain looked like on Iwo Jima,” he recalled. “We were told that Iwo Jima probably would be a three-day operation. What our (intelligence) didn’t

It wasn’t long before we understood what they were saying and that was, “you ain’t gonna like it here.”

know was how many enemy there were underground. Their aerial photos revealed what was above ground, but

not what was underground.”

In February 1945, Dinsmore boarded a U.S. Navy troop ship and a convoy of more than 600 U.S. ships departed Saipan for Iwo Jima. Dinsmore said the Marines were given a meal ration card with 21 numbers.

“Each time you went through the chow line, the crew would take your ticket and they would punch out of the number,” he said. “The closer we got to Iwo Jima, the nearer we got to that number 21. Psychologically, it was a little bit severe. A lot of us wondered if that number 21 would be our last meal and unfortunately it was for some of our battalion.”



On Feb. 19, Dinsmore and his tank crew boarded a U.S. Navy Landing Ship, Tank (LST) and traveled approximately 4,000 yards from the ship to Red Beach Two. During the journey, the Navy LSTs shook while the armada of Navy ships bombarded the island.

“The LST’s discharged



*World War II Veteran
Lloyd Dinsmore*

us down the (ship) ramp into the ocean and we formed up on a line of departure and made our way to the beach," he said. "The battle wagons were shelling (the island with) 16 inch shells. As we went underneath (the guns), they could almost blow us out of the water."

Unfortunately, things went wrong in a hurry. After landing on Red Beach Two, his tank immediately became stuck in the sand due to loose sand.

"When our driver tried to back us into the ocean, our tank would not move because of an overheated clutch," he said. "The other tanks on our part of the beach left and we were the only thing on that beach for several minutes until the first wave of infantry came in."

Fear set in for the crew as they were sitting ducks for the Japanese.

"I can still remember as I was digging into that sand, I heard myself say 'My God, my God. What am I doing here,'" he said. "For about an hour, we had to hunker down there behind a wall of sand and being the only vehicle on that beach for a few minutes, it was a hot

I can still remember as I was digging into that sand, I heard myself say "My God, my God. What am I doing here?"

old time on Red Beach Two."

After the first wave of Marines landed, the violence around Dinsmore was horrific.

"Red Beach Two lived up to its name," he said. "It was soon red with the blood of many young Marines who were hit as they exposed themselves over the wall of sand."



World War II Veteran Lloyd Dinsmore speaks at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center on Sept. 10.

After the tank's clutch cooled, they proceeded to the base of Mt. Suribachi and supported the ground troops. On Feb. 23, the fourth day of fighting, Dinsmore was engaged in combat when he heard U.S. Navy ships sounding their horns and troops cheering.

He looked up and saw the second American flag being raised atop Mt. Suribachi.

"The first one was up and flying before we actually saw it, because we were pretty busy ourselves down at the base," he said. "Of course we were mighty proud to see it up there, but we knew that we were clear down at the end of this island and we had a long ways to go to get to the other end."

For 26 days, Dinsmore fought on Iwo Jima before being relieved.

"As the frontline moved forward, we moved with it," he said. "We were released from our duties because we were so close down to the other end of island that there wasn't a need for artillery."

Dinsmore and his unit returned to the ocean and climbed aboard a U.S. Navy troop ship.

"When we climbed the cargo net and got up on the deck of the ship, they said you guys can have a hot shower or a hot meal, whichever one you want first," he said. "Having not had a shower for about 30 days, I decided I wanted the shower. My hair was in such a mess I couldn't even run my fingers through it."

He later returned to Maui where his unit prepared for the invasion of the Japanese mainland. In August 1945, the battalion loaded their tanks and equipment aboard a troop ship and were within hours of departing. But when the second atomic bomb was dropped, the war ended.

"Another few hours we would have been at sea," he said. "Probably, we would have ended up in the occupation of Japan. But as it was, we got to stay in Hawaii."

Looking back on his time in the Marine Corps, Dinsmore said he wouldn't trade his combat service for any amount of money.

"It was a great experience to be in the Marine Corps during World War II," he said. "I wouldn't take a million dollars for it and I wouldn't give a dime to do it again." ★



Army Veteran Makes a Difference for the Homeless

Story and photo by Nathan Schaeffer,
Public Affairs Specialist

Army Veteran Jennie Inman outside the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center.

All across America, there are countless citizens who strive to make a difference in the lives of others. They don't do their good deeds for fame or anything in return, but to help others.

Army Veteran Jennie Inman, who lives in Delaware, Okla., strives to make a difference for the homeless.

About 18 months ago, Inman wanted to find a use for the numerous plastic materials she had accumulated in her home. So she went online and researched recycling ideas.

She discovered plastic tote bags and bed rolls, and watched video tutorials and read websites to learn how to make them.

"I had so many plastic bags at the house and I hated to just keep throwing them away," said Inman, who receives her care at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC). "When I found out uses for plastic bags, I really hit the jackpot."

The next step for Inman was figuring out a use for the items she had made. So she asked around in her local

community to find someone who could use the items. She became aware of a local church that was making plastic bed rolls for the homeless in Mexico.

"Well, I thought we have lots of homeless in Tulsa and in Muskogee," said Inman, who worked at JCMVAMC for 12 years as a secretary. "I decided that (donating the items) was a good thing to do."

So she contacted churches that assist the homeless in local communities and began donating the items to churches who would then distribute the items to the homeless.

Inman said the items are not hard to make, but she eventually ran out of plastic materials. So she enlisted the help of her grandchildren to scavenge for plastic bags and bottles.

While she said she could probably sell the items for money, she said she prefers to help those in need.

"I could sell them online," said Inman. "They sell for anywhere from \$25 to \$50. I think our homeless need it more than I do. That's why I'm giving back." ★



A plastic tote bag made by Army Veteran Jennie Inman

Filling in the Gap

JCMVAMC, Community Gather for Mental Health Summit

Story and photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) recognizes that meeting the needs of Veterans and their families requires collaboration and partnership between VA, other federal agencies and local communities.

On August 22, the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) hosted a collaborative Mental Health Summit between VA and community mental health leaders at the Tulsa Technical Center in Broken Arrow.

The purpose of the summit was to establish and enhance positive working relationships between both groups

and to nurture engagement to better address the broad mental health care needs of Veterans and their families.

Following a brief overview of VA mental health services, VA staff and community leaders participated in small group discussions throughout the day on topics such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), military sexual trauma, Veteran homelessness, substance use disorders and outreach and engagement strategies.

“The Mental Health Summit was an important opportunity for all of us to sit at the same table, to listen and learn from each other,” said James

Floyd, JCMVAMC Director. “We all want the same thing - for our Veterans and their families to be well cared for. And we know that they cannot receive the quality, coordinated services they need if we are not talking to each other regularly and working together.”

Dr. Beth Jeffries, Lead Psychologist & Supervisor for JCMVAMC’s PTSD Program, said forming partnerships with the local community is critical to filling any gaps in services that may exist.

“We try to offer as much if not everything that we can,” said Jeffries. “But the reality is, there are gaps and there

VA staff and community leaders participate in a small group discussion during the Mental Health Summit.



are gaps that community leaders can help us fill. The whole idea is trying to begin steps to develop a network of service for Veterans to help meet their needs.”

Jeffries also said a critical purpose of the summit was to encourage local providers to reach out to VA for support.

“We know that community providers often see Veterans, but maybe they’ve never worked with PTSD,” said Jeffries. “Maybe they don’t really know what it is or know what to do. So having the VA on the forefront of that person’s mind and encourage them to call us helps VA fill those gaps in services.”

Kathy Avery, a mental health counselor for the Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology in Okmulgee, attended the summit and said it is important to network with VA to better serve the Veterans on her campus.

“We have an increasing number of Veterans who are coming to take advantage of their VA benefits,” said Avery. “We want to be able to serve them and meet their needs once they actually get on campus and that’s one of the reasons I’m here.”

Avery also said she learned more about VA benefits and services and said she would share the information she learned with Veteran students.

“I know from working with the VA in the past, I knew there was a lot of stuff available,” said Avery. “That’s one of the things I hope to do a better job with, so we can let the students who are on our campus know what is available out there and I can help them get connected.”

To assist community mental health providers in serving Veterans, VA also offers a Community Provider Toolkit which is located at <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders/>. You can find information on connecting with VA, understanding

mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders/. You can find information on connecting with VA, understanding

military culture and experience, as well as tools for working with a variety of mental health conditions. ★



JCMVAMC Now Using Text Message Notifications

New Tool Reminds Veterans of Their Appointments

Story by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

With the prevalent use of cell phones in society today, hospitals and doctor's offices are now using text message notifications to contact patients and remind them of upcoming appointments.

In August, the Behavioral Medicine Service at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) began using text messaging as a new method to contact Veterans.

When a Veteran checks into one of the three JCMVAMC Mental Health clinics for an appointment, they are asked by a staff member if they want to sign up for text message notifications.

Dr. Beth Jeffries, a VA psychologist, said text messaging is not only convenient for Veterans but will also help VA decrease patient no-shows.

"Obviously we're trying to keep our no show rate as low as possible," said Jeffries. "But we're also trying to make it convenient for the Veterans and to use a medium they actually like and they actually use."

While all Veterans are eligible to receive the notifications, Jeffries said she believes younger Veterans might be more receptive to receiving notifications.

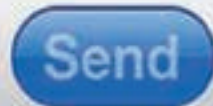
"Not to generalize or stereotype, but obviously the younger generation is much more acclimated to using a cell phone," said Jeffries. "It's so much a part of their life. They seem to be the ones who are a little bit more comfortable with it, but we're certainly not excluding anyone who wants to be notified by text message."

To ensure text messaging doesn't compromise the Veteran's privacy, notifications are generic and do not contain personally identifiable information.

"We don't identify the patient by name and we don't identify the doctor or the clinic," said Jeffries. "We just use a very generic message. Then maybe that will spark the Veteran and remind them that they do have an appointment. If they're not sure, they can contact us back."

Jeffries said feedback from Veterans has so far been very positive.

"There's almost a surprise element to it," she said. "They can't believe we're doing that now so I think that's really good. It's really working out great. The Veterans love it and we've had absolutely zero complaints."



Telemental Health Technology Helping VA Reach More Veterans

Story and photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) serves Veterans in 25 counties in Eastern Oklahoma, many of whom are rural Veterans.

Due to a variety of circumstances such as distance, lack of transportation, work, family commitments and disabilities, some rural Veterans face barriers to accessing VA health care services.

To reduce these potential barriers, VA augments its traditional face-to-face appointments with Telehealth services, which enables providers to meet with Veterans via a secure video teleconferencing system.

More than five years ago, the JCMVAMC Behavioral Medicine Service began using Telehealth, which is referred to as Telemental Health, to increase access for Veterans.

Because the Hartshorne and Vinita clinics do not offer all of the specialty care services that are available at the Muskogee hospital or Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic in Tulsa, Veterans are able to drive to the Hartshorne and Vinita clinics and meet with a provider in Muskogee or Tulsa via Telemental Health.

Veterans who live near Hartshorne and Vinita can also attend group mental health classes that are offered in Muskogee and Tulsa via Telemental Health.

"Most of the U.S. is rural and a lot of our Veterans live in what can be considered a rural area," said Dr. Beth Jeffries, Telemental Coordinator and Lead Psychologist and Super-

visor for JCMVAMC's Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Program. "Telemental Health really allows us to reach people in areas we wouldn't be reaching otherwise."

In the past year, the medical center has significantly increased its telehealth usage. In Fiscal Year 2012, facility providers had approximately 200 Telemental Health encounters with patients. That number increased to more than 1,500 in Fiscal Year 2013.

Jeffries said the increase is due to a greater emphasis on Telehealth technology and the hiring of two mental health providers who see patients solely via Telemental Health.

While the program's usage has increased, the hesitation among providers and Veterans to use the technology has also decreased.

Jeffries said an appointment with a World War II Veteran several years ago via Telemental Health eliminated any hesitation she might have had. When the appointment first began, Jeffries first apologized to the Veteran since the appointment was not face-to-face.

"The man said 'oh, don't apologize,'" said Jeffries. "It turned out he had worked on one of the first sonars used in World War II. He said 'I love technology. I can't keep up like I use to, but I love it.' I learned a very valuable lesson that day to not make an assumption because someone is 90 years old that they won't like this. I've had a much different attitude about using it in the years since and it's a big help to Veterans." ★

Marsha Bunney, ARNP, uses a secure video teleconferencing system at the JCM East's Mental Health clinic.

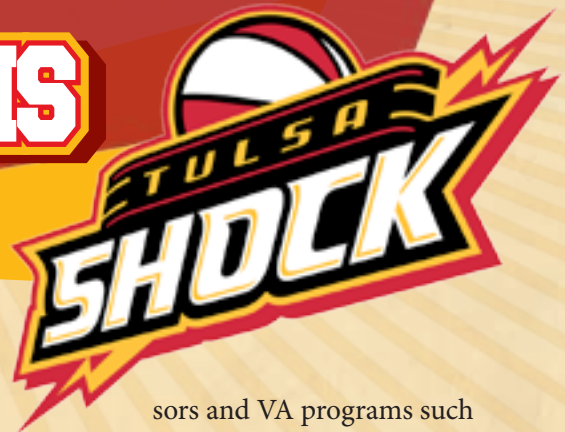




More than 225 Veterans and their significant others received a free ticket to the Tulsa Shock game vs. the Atlanta Dream on July 21 on behalf of VA and sponsors.

VA, TULSA SHOCK HONOR VETERANS

Story and photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist



The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) teamed up with the Tulsa Shock and several other sponsors to host a Veterans Appreciation Day event on July 21 at the BOK Center during the Shock's game with the Atlanta Dream.

More than 225 Veterans and their significant others received a free ticket to the game along with a meal voucher on behalf of VA and sponsors.

Organized by the JCMVAMC Combat Care Team, the purpose of the annual outreach event is to thank Veterans for their service, educate them about VA benefits and services and encourage Veterans to enroll for VA health care.

"We're here today to show our support for our Veterans and welcome them home," said Tracey Stevenson, a VA Social Worker with the Combat Care Team. "We also want to get them enrolled if they're not and get them connected with the benefits and services they have earned."

Prior to the game, VA staff passed out VA information, personally thanked Veterans for their service and presented Veterans with a commemorative JCMVAMC coin.

Outside the arena in the main concourse, Veterans and the public also had the opportunity to drop by informational booths for both spon-

sors and VA programs such as Suicide Prevention, My HealtheVet, Caregiver Support Program and the Homeless Program.

The Tulsa Shock also invited 11 Veterans to participate in the Shock's pre-game on the court and give high fives to the Shock players following introductions. Shock players also presented each of the 11 Veterans with an autographed basketball.

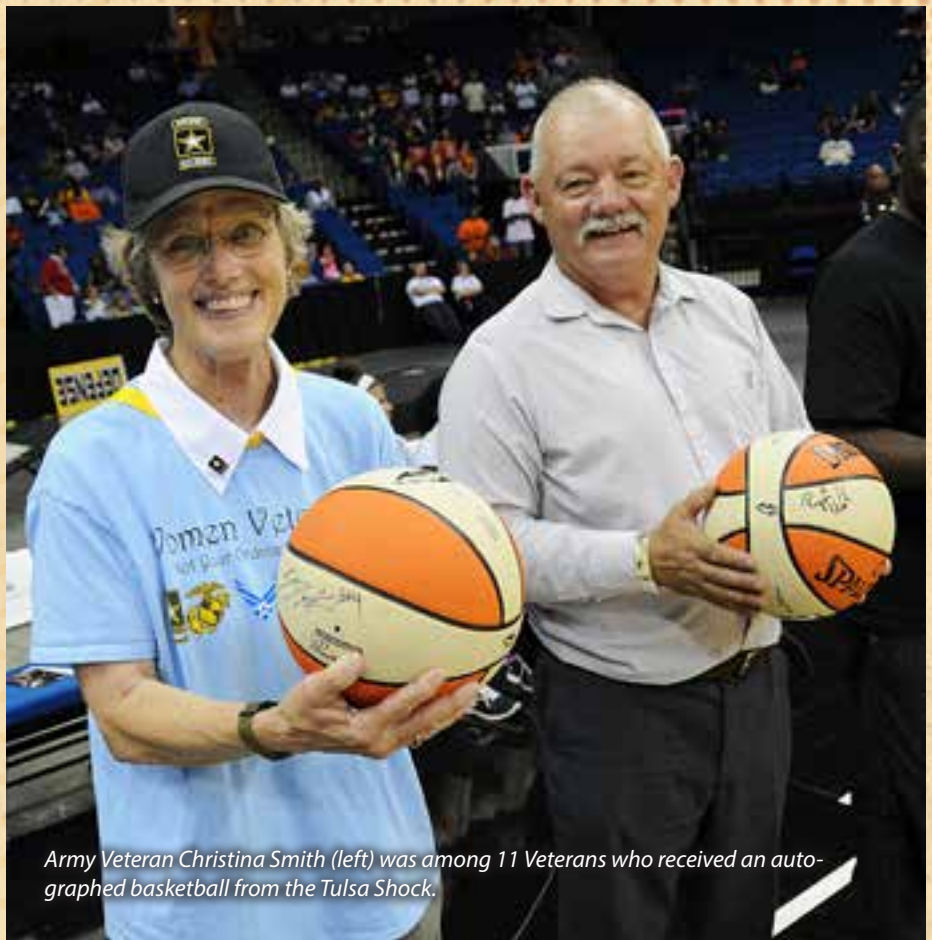
We're here ... to show our support for our Veterans and welcome them home.

Army Veteran Christina Smith, who is a Shock season ticket holder, said she was thrilled to be among the 11 Veterans chosen to receive an autographed basketball.

“I was shocked that I was selected to go down there, but I’m honored,” said Smith, who served in the Army from 1977 to 1999 and now lives in Tulsa. “I loved it. I’m a season ticket holder, so it’s pretty exciting.”

Smith, who is also the president of the Tulsa Chapter of the Oklahoma Women Veterans Organization, also participated in the Veterans Appreciation Day event as a sponsor and said she was glad VA was hosting the event to Welcome Home Veterans.

“I thought it was exciting and I think the people who came really enjoyed it,” said Smith. “I hope we do it again next year. I think it was thumbs up all the way around.” ★



Army Veteran Christina Smith (left) was among 11 Veterans who received an autographed basketball from the Tulsa Shock.



VA staff educate Veterans about My HealtheVet, VA's online personal health record.

DAV Donates Two Vehicles to Hospital

Story and photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

The national Disabled American Veterans (DAV) organization donated two 2013 Ford Flex vehicles to the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) in August, which will be used by the local DAV Volunteer Transportation Network.

The DAV Volunteer Transportation Network is operated by volunteers who provide free transportation for Veterans to and from the Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic in Tulsa and Muskogee hospital.

The new vehicles provide seating for up to seven people and will replace one aging DAV vehicle each at the Tulsa clinic and Muskogee hospital. The Tulsa clinic currently has three DAV vehicles, while the Muskogee hospital has four.

Misty Summers, the DAV Hospital Service Coordinator at the Tulsa clinic, said the new vehicle has more seating than other vehicles, which will allow DAV to transport more Veterans.

"At the end of the day, we can take more Veterans at one time and get more people home," said Summers. "We can load more people up."

Summers said Veterans have already given positive feedback about the new vehicle.

"Veterans say they absolutely love it," said Summers. "It has a lot more leg room and it's a lot more comfortable for the Veterans. It is absolutely the most comfortable vehicle I've ever ridden in or driven."

DAV Volunteer Transportation Network

Eligibility: Veterans who need transportation to their VA authorized medical appointments. The Veteran must be able to enter and exit the vans with NO ASSISTANCE. The vans are not handicap accessible.

Appointments: Veterans can schedule transportation by calling the following Hospital Service Coordinators:

Muskogee: Caron Gabbard - 918-577-3737

Tulsa: Misty Summers - 918-628-2607

Rules and Regulations: All passengers must have an authorized VA medical appointment. All travel requests will be made in advance with the Hospital Service Coordinator's office. There is no smoking, chewing tobacco, drinking, food, foul language, weapons, drugs or any illegal activity allowed on the vans. Seat belts will be used at all times. All passengers must be ready at the appointed times. The vans will not make personal side trips. Any Veteran utilizing the vans will not be eligible for reimbursement through the VA travel reimbursement program. Any passenger who violates any of the regulations will be denied travel.

Volunteers Needed

The DAV Volunteer Transportation Network needs volunteer drivers at each location. If you would like to volunteer, please contact the Hospital Service Coordinator office closest to you. Volunteer drivers do not receive payments for the services they provide.

Caron Gabbard, Muskogee DAV Hospital Service Coordinator, Don Johnson, DAV volunteer driver, Melvin Francis Jr., DAV volunteer driver, and Dax Allcorn, Voluntary Service Specialist, pose for a photo with a new 2013 Ford Flex vehicle.





Veterans Transportation Network

The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) provides transportation for Veterans with special needs and Veterans who don't have transportation to and from their outpatient appointments.

Who's Eligible?

All Veterans enrolled at the medical center are eligible for the VTS, but top priority will be given to Veterans with disabilities, wheelchair-bound, cancer patients, and those who are at a high risk for suicide.

Do the Outpatient Clinics also offer this new service?

Yes. Along with the Muskogee hospital, the Hartshorne, Tulsa and Vinita VA Outpatient Clinics also offer this service.

How do I schedule a ride?

Veterans can schedule transportation through their VA primary care provider or by calling the VTS call center at 918-577-3500 or toll free at 877-905-4538.

Today is a Great Day to Quit Smoking

Story by Eileen Lyon, LCSW, JCMVAMC Lead Clinician for Tobacco Treatment

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease, disability and death in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarette smoking results in more than 443,000 premature deaths in the United States each year - about 1 in every 5 U.S. deaths - and an additional 8.6 million people suffer with a serious illness caused by smoking.

Thus, for every one person who dies from smoking, 20 more suffer from at least one serious tobacco-related illness.

The harmful effects of smoking extend far beyond the smoker. Exposure to secondhand smoke can cause serious diseases and death. Each year, an estimated 126 million Americans are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke and almost 50 thousand nonsmokers die from diseases caused by secondhand smoke exposure.

How Does Tobacco Affect the Brain?

Cigarettes and other forms of tobacco - including cigars, pipe tobacco, snuff and chewing tobacco - contain the addictive drug nicotine. Nicotine is readily absorbed into the bloodstream when a tobacco product is chewed, inhaled or smoked. A typical smoker will take 10 puffs on a cigarette over a period of 5 minutes that the cigarette is lit. Thus, a person who smokes about 1½ packs (30 cigarettes) daily gets 300 “hits” of nicotine each day.

Upon entering the bloodstream, nicotine immediately stimulates the adrenal glands to release the hormone epinephrine (adrenaline). Epinephrine stimulates the central nervous system and increases blood pressure, respiration and heart rate.

Like cocaine, heroin and marijuana, nicotine increases levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which affects the brain pathways that control reward and pleasure.

sure. For many tobacco users, long-term brain changes induced by continued nicotine exposure result in addiction, a condition of compulsive drug seeking and use, even in the face of negative consequences.

Studies suggest that additional compounds in tobacco smoke, such as acetaldehyde, may enhance nicotine's effects on the brain. When an addicted user tries to quit, he or she experiences withdrawal symptoms including irritability, attention difficulties, sleep disturbances, increased appetite and powerful cravings for tobacco. Treatments can help smokers manage these symptoms and improve the likelihood of successfully quitting.

Are There Effective Treatments for Tobacco Addiction?

Tobacco addiction is a chronic disease that often requires multiple attempts to quit. Although some smokers are able to quit without help, many others need assistance. Both behavioral interventions (counseling) and medication can help smokers quit; but the combination of medication with counseling is more effective than either alone.

If you are interested in Smoking Treatment, talk to your Primary Care Physician or call 1-855-QUIT VET (1-855-784-8838), a toll free telephone smoking quitline. You can also text the word VET to 47848 from your mobile phone to sign up for smokefreeVET – a mobile text message smoking cessation service or visit: www.smokefree.gov/VET

Veterans and non-Veterans can also call 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669), a toll-free hotline.

Smoking Treatment Program at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center

The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center offers a five-week Smoking Treatment Program. During the first week, Veterans will attend a Pre-Smoking Group, complete a brief assessment from a provider and will be evaluated for nicotine replacement therapy.

After completing the Pre-Smoking Group, Veterans will be enrolled in a four-week Smoking Treatment Program. The program is held year round at the JCM East, Tulsa VA Behavioral Medicine Clinic, and Vinita VA Outpatient Clinic. ★

Be Safe Do You Know the Facts of STDs?

By Janet Gearin, VA Registered Nurse

Do you know the facts? Do you know how STD's are spread? More importantly do you know what a STD is? If you do not know, then you cannot protect yourself from getting one. Learning about them "up close and personal" is the first step in protecting yourself from infection.

Here are the facts:

- 1) STD is an acronym for "sexually transmitted disease." There are 10 and these are their names: Bacterial Vaginosis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Hepatitis (viral), Herpes, HIV, Human Papillomavirus (HPV infection), PID (Pelvic Inflammatory Disease), Syphilis and Trichomoniasis.

Be warned that these diseases can hurt you and, if left untreated, they can be deadly.

- 2) STD's do not discriminate as they will infect anyone. Effective strategies of prevention are: abstinence (no oral, anal or vaginal sex), vaccination for Hepatitis B and HPV, partners who engage in mutual monogamy, reduction of the number of sex partners, the use of male latex condoms and getting tested.

New Online Veterans Health Library

Veterans have a new tool to take charge of their health and health care: the Veterans Health Library (VHL), an online library of health topics geared toward Veterans.

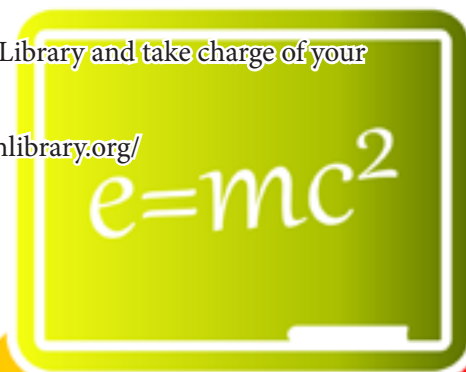
Topics ranging from diseases, conditions and medications, to rehabilitation and "Living with..." can be found in the Library.

With over 1,500 health information sheets and 150 videos in the VHL, Veterans can learn about topics such as post-

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Agent Orange exposure, combat-related cold injury and traumatic brain injury, just to name a few. These Veteran-specific health topics are not easily found on other health Web sites, but are featured in the VHL.

Visit the Veterans Health Library and take charge of your health today. ★

<http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/>





My HealthVet Celebrates 10 Years

On Veterans Day, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the launch of My HealtheVet, (www.myhealth.va.gov).

My HealtheVet is VA's award-winning website that offers Veterans secure access to portions of information in their VA health care records anywhere and anytime. Its web-based tools give users greater control over their care and wellness, helping them become active partners in their health care.

In addition to allowing Veterans access to their records, My HealtheVet lets them save, print and share their health information using the VA Blue Button, refill VA prescription(s) online and track their health activities, among other functions.

Veterans who upgrade their accounts, free of charge, can opt in to Secure Messaging to communicate electronically with their VA health care teams between visits, and can also view VA appointments, get VA Wellness Reminders, access VA lab results and more.

"VA is dedicated to providing Veterans with the best experience possible, both at VA facilities and online," said Theresa Hancock, Director, My HealtheVet National Program.

"We are proud to offer Veterans additional ways for them to become active partners in their health care and well-being."

All Veterans are encouraged to enroll or upgrade today at www.myhealth.va.gov.

For more information, contact the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center My HealtheVet Office at 918-577-3824 or stop by the office which is located on the 1st floor near pharmacy. ★

Learn what the Blue Button can do for you.



View, Share, Learn.

www.myhealth.va.gov



Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Throughout the month of October, the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center Women Veterans Committee, Federally Employed Women, Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program and Employee Health held events in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

On Oct. 3, the “Get Your Pink on 2K Walk” was held at the Muskogee hospital and Tulsa VA Behavioral Medicine Clinic. A total of 100 participants took part in the 2K, which was also held to promote employee health. Participants received breast health information, Healthy Living messages and incentives such as pink bracelets, handmade key rings, pink ribbons and bottled water.

A Breast Cancer “Wall of Honor” table was set up in the Muskogee hospital Main Lobby to honor survivors and those we have lost. Survivors were given the opportunity to add their name to the display, and family and friends could write the name of a love one who has passed away from breast cancer.

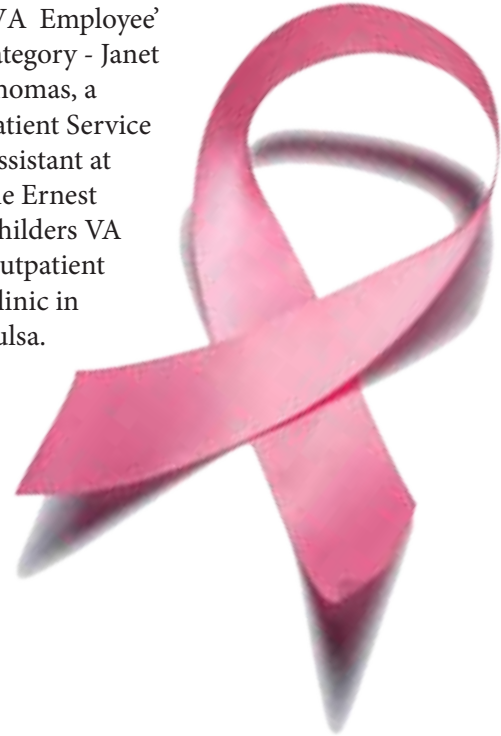
A Pink Pumpkin Contest was also held, which was open to the public. There were a total of 13 entries, which were judged Oct. 31. Thank you to all the participants in the first ever Pink Pumpkin Contest.

Pumpkin Contest Winners:

‘Children under 16’ category - Walker Scott

‘Veteran’ category - Camille Wafer

‘VA Employee’ category - Janet Thomas, a Patient Service Assistant at the Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic in Tulsa.



Healthy Living Calendar

Cooking Education Program

This program provides hands-on experience and helps Veterans become more independent and responsible for their nutritional care.



Muskogee

Wednesdays in the Muskogee hospital auditorium, excluding federal holidays, at 9 a.m.

MOVE! Introduction Class



MOVE! is VA's national weight management program designed to help Veterans lose weight, keep it off and improve their health.

Muskogee

Mondays, excluding federal holidays, at 2 p.m. in the MOVE/ Nutrition office located on the 2nd floor.

Tulsa

Mondays, excluding federal holidays, at 1 p.m. in the Boomer/ Sooner Room.

Vinita

Thursdays, excluding federal holidays, at 12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m. in the conference room, by appointment only, class size limited.

MOVE! Group Class

Learn how to improve your eating, exercise and behavior habits.



Muskogee

Wednesdays, excluding federal holidays, from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. and 3 - 4 p.m. in the auditorium.

Tulsa

Tuesdays, excluding federal holidays, at 10-11 a.m. or 1-2 p.m. in the Boomer/Sooner Room.

Vinita

Thursdays, excluding federal holidays, at 12:30 p.m -1:30 p.m. in the Conference Room by appointment only, class size limited

MOVE! Support Group

Receive support from other Veterans who have participated in the MOVE! Program.

Tulsa and Vinita

Fourth Thursday of the month at 2 p.m. in the Boomer/Sooner Room (Tulsa) and Conference Room in (Vinita).

Diabetic/Pre-Diabetic Group Education

Learn survival skills for living with diabetes and improving eating habits to reduce risks.

Muskogee

Tuesdays, excluding federal holidays, at 1 p.m. in the MOVE/ Nutrition office located on the 2nd floor by appointment only.

Tulsa

Mondays, excluding federal holidays, at 10 a.m. in the Boomer/ Sooner Room by appointment only.

Lipid Education

Learn how to improve your heart health through lifestyle changes.



Tulsa

First and Third Thursday, excluding federal holidays, at 2 p.m. in the Sooner Room.

Nutrition and Wellness

Learn the basics of nutrition.

Muskogee

To register for Muskogee classes, contact Gregory Thomas, RD, at 918-577-3287. To register for Tulsa classes, contact Melinda Smiley, RD/LD, at 918-628-2509.

Tulsa

Fourth Monday of the month at 1:30 p.m. in the Sooner Room.



Individual Nutrition Appointments

Learn the basics of nutrition on a variety of topics.

Muskogee, Tulsa & Vinita

Contact the Nutrition Administrative Support Assistant at 918-577-3214 or 1-888-397-8387, extension 3214 to schedule an appointment.

Veterans Open Art Studio/Writing Workshop

The Open Art Studio and Writing Workshop gives Veterans an opportunity to create art or write and socialize with other Veterans.



Muskogee

Mondays, excluding federal holidays, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. in the auditorium. Contact Deborah Moreno at 918-577-4014 for more information.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

STAND BY THEM

Confidential help for Veterans and their families

1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

Veterans Crisis Line

*** Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to 838255 ***

The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center and Hartshorne, Tulsa and Vinita VA Outpatient Clinics served approximately 37,000 Veterans from a 25-county area in Eastern Oklahoma in 2012.



Jack. C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (Muskogee)
918-577-3000 or toll free at 1-888-397-8387



Jack C. Montgomery East (Muskogee)
918-577-3699



Behavioral Medicine Service Clinic (Tulsa)
918-610-2000



Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic (Tulsa)
918-628-2500
or toll free at 1-888-398-8387



Hartshorne VA Outpatient Clinic
888-878-1598



Vinita VA Outpatient Clinic
918-713-5400

The Price of Freedom is Visible Here



VA
HEALTH
CARE | Defining
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in the 21st Century